

Just Two Phones In Early Camas

Since the Crown Zellerbach corporation started operations in Camas 70 years ago there has been an astonishing development in telephone communications, according to O.M. "Dick" Huycke, combination man for the West Coast Telephone company in this area.

"At that time," said Huycke, "the first telephone exchange in the world, at New Haven, Connecticut, was not five years old. Telephone service between communities in the Pacific Northwest was virtually unknown. There were no telephones in Camas.

"The first telephone here was installed in MacMaster's store in 1897. Three years later an extension to MacMaster's residence was added. It was not until 1910 that the first telephone was installed in the Crown Zellerbach mill," Huycke continued.

"In 1927 there was a magneto switchboard and several hundred old-style magneto telephones. In that year the system was converted to common battery lamp signalling. Two years later when the West Coast Telephone company came into existence there were about 600 telephones in Camas and Washougal. Our growth since then has been rapid. By the end of the war in 1945 we had 1,469 telephones in Camas and Washougal. Today there are over 3,300 telephones in the two exchanges, an increase of 125 per cent in less than eight years.

"Last December, to meet the growing use of telephone service by the Crown Zellerbach corporation, we installed a private branch exchange in the mill, the latest and most up-to-date automatic switching equipment obtainable. This automatic exchange serves about 240 local telephones in the plant, as well as outgoing and incoming calls over nine truck lines. We take pride in the assistance that our service has contributed to the development and growth of this big mill and of the community whose prosperity depends so largely upon it," concluded Huycke.